

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 190374

STADIS////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: PANAMA TO JOIN NON-ALIGNED GROUP (NAG)

REF: PANAMA 4823

1. DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN WATCHING CLOSELY PANAMA'S EDGING TOWARD JOINING THE NAG. DEPUTY NEGOTIATOR BELL FIRST RAISED THE MATTER WITH AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ-REVILLA ON JUNE 25 AND AGAIN ON AUGUST 8, PRIOR TO RECEIPT OF REFTEL. IT IS OUR VIEW THAT SUCH A STEP BY PANAMA AT THIS TIME WILL STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF TREATY OPPONENTS AND MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR TREATY PROPONENTS IN THE U.S. TO MAKE A CONVINCING CASE FOR "PARTNERSHIP" WITH A COUNTRY BELONGING TO A GROUP WHICH REGULARLY TAKES POSITIONS ON ISSUES SUCH AS ISRAEL AND PUERTO RICO WHICH ARE VERY OFFENSIVE TO US.

2. WE UNDERSTAND GOP RATIONALE FOR THIS ACTION AND
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RECOGNIZE THAT THE MOMENTUM FOR IT IS SUCH THAT IT MAY BE

TOO LATE TO STOP. NEVERTHELESS, WE WANT TO ONCE AGAIN GO ON RECORD WITH THE GOP INDICATING OUR VIEWS THAT THIS IS A COUNTERPRODUCTIVE MOVE AND THAT THE NEED FOR A POSITIVE PANAMANIAN IMAGE IN THE CONGRESS MAKES THIS A PARTICULARLY INOPPORTUNE TIME TO JOIN SUCH A GROUP.

3. AMBASSADOR REQUESTED TO MAKE REPRESENTATION AT APPROPRIATE LEVEL ALONG LINES OF FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS. ALSO, IT MAY BE USEFUL TO MAKE LOW KEY APPROACHES TO TORRIJOS CONFIDANTS IN A SIMILAR VEIN.

4. PANAMA'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE NAG WILL INEVITABLY DRAW IT INTO SUPPORT FOR POSITIONS WHICH ARE HOSTILE AND OFFENSIVE TO THE U.S. THIS WILL STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF TREATY OPPONENTS WHO CLAIM THE GOP IS UNRELIABLE AND UNFRIENDLY; IT WILL ALSO ALIENATE SYMPATHETIC AND NEUTRAL OPINION IN THE U.S. WHICH WOULD QUESTION OUR ENTERING INTO A "PARTNERSHIP" WITH A COUNTRY WHICH JOINS IN SUPPORTING SUCH POSITIONS.

5. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS IT IS U.S. PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL OPINION WHICH WILL BE THE DECIDING FACTORS IN EVENTUAL TREATY RATIFICATION, NOT THE OPINION OF NATIONS OF THE THIRD WORLD. PANAMA SHOULD DISTINGUISH BETWEEN MOUNTING AN INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO INFLUENCE IN A POSITIVE MANNER U.S. PUBLIC OPINION AND MOVES SUCH AS THIS WHICH WILL HAVE EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE EFFECT. WHILE A STRONGLY WORDED RESOLUTION CONDEMNING THE U.S. COMING OUT OF THE NON-ALIGNED MEETING IN LIMA MIGHT WARM THE HEARTS OF PANAMANIAN ANXIOUS TO SEE THE NEGOTIATIONS SUCCESSFULLY FINISHED, THE REACTION HERE WILL BE 100 PER CENT NEGATIVE, EVEN AMONG PANAMA'S MOST ARDENT SUPPORTERS. AS IN PERSONAL RELATIONS, A NATION IS JUDGED BY ITS PUBLIC POSITIONS AS WELL AS BY OTHER QUALITIES. MEMBERSHIP IN THE ORGANIZATION OF NON-ALIGNED WILL BE A LIABILITY RATHER THAN AN ASSET IN GETTING A TREATY RATIFIED IN THE U.S. IT WILL MAKE THAT JOB MORE DIFFICULT FOR PANAMA'S FRIENDS HERE. THERE ARE MANY OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORUMS IN WHICH PANAMA CAN MAKE ITS CASE AND MUCH MORE EFFECTIVELY. ONCE A TREATY IS NEGOTIATED,

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TIATED, PANAMA'S MEMBERSHIP IN AND IDENTIFICATION WITH THE NON-ALIGNED WILL BE A LIABILITY FOR IT IN WHATEVER PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORT IT MIGHT UNDERTAKE IN THE U.S. TO EXPLAIN THE NEW TREATY. KISSINGER

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